THE

WRANGLING PHILOSOPHERS;

OR,

VOLNEY'S ANSWER

TO

DOCTOR PRIESTLEY,

ON HIS PAMPHLET, ENTITLED

"OBSERVATIONS UPON THE INCREASE OF INFIDELITY,

" WITH ANIMADVERSIONS UPON THE WRITINGS OF SEVERAL
" MODERN UNBELIEVERS AND ESPECIALLY THE RUINS OF
" MR. VOLNEY WITH THIS MOTTO;

" Minds of little Penetration reſt naturally on the Surface of Things. They do
" not like to pierce deep into them, for fear of Labour and Trouble; ſome-
" times ſtill more for fear of Truth———"

By C. F. Volney

WITH NOTES BY THE EDITOR.

Eh quoi! Mathan! d'un prêtre eſt-ce là le language?—*Racine, Athalie, Act* 2.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THIS Letter from Mr. VOLNEY to Dr. PRIESTLEY is not given to the Public, on account of peculiar merit which it possesses, nor yet from any concurrence, on the part of the Editor, with the opinions which it contains, but from the consideration that a controversy between an *infidel philosophist*, and an *Unitarian philosopher*, has something novel and curious in it, and that the names of the combatants are sufficient, of themselves, to render the combat itself not uninteresting.

VOLNEY's ANSWER

TO

DOCTOR PRIESTLEY.

I received in due time your pamphlet on the increaſe of infidelity, together with the note without date which accompanied it.* My anſwer has been delayed by the incidents of buſineſs, and even by ill health, which you will ſurely excuſe: this delay has, beſides, no inconvenience in it. The queſtion between us is not of a very urgent nature: the world would not go on leſs well with or without my anſwer as with or without your book. I might, indeed, have diſpenſed with returning you any anſwer at all; and I ſhould have been warranted in ſo doing, by the manner in which you have ſtated the debate, and by the opinion pretty generally received that, on certain occaſions, and with certain perſons, the moſt noble reply is ſilence. You ſeem even to have been aware of this yourſelf, conſidering the extreme precautions you have taken to deprive me of this reſource; but as, according to our French cuſtoms, any anſwer is an act of civility, I am not willing to concede the advantage of politeneſs—beſides, although ſilence is ſometimes very ſignificant, its eloquence is not underſtood by every one, and the public which has not the leiſure to analyze diſputes (often of little intereſt) has a reaſonable right to require at leaſt ſome preliminary explanations; reſerving to itſelf, ſhould the diſcuſſion degenerate into the recriminative clamours of an irritated ſelf-love, to allow the right of ſilence to him in whom it becomes the virtue of moderation.

I have read, therefore, your animadverſions on my Ruins, which you are pleaſed to claſs among the writings of modern unbelievers; and ſince you abſolutely inſiſt on my expreſſing my opinion before the public, I ſhall now fulfil this rather diſagreeable taſk, with all poſſible brevity, for the ſake of economizing the time of our readers.

* Dr. Prieſtley ſent his pamphlet to Volney, deſiring his anſwer to the ſtrictures on his opinions in his "Ruins of Empires." *See* P. S.—*Ed.*

In the firſt place, Sir, it appears evidently, from your pamphlet, that your deſign is leſs to attack my book than my perſonal and moral character; and in order that the public may pronounce with accuracy on this point, I ſubmit ſeveral paſſages fitted to throw light upon the ſubject.

You ſay, in the preface of your diſcourſes, P. xii, 'there are, however, unbelievers more ignorant than Mr. Paine; Mr. Volney, Lequinio, and others in France ſay,' &c.

Alſo in the preface of your preſent obſervations, P. xx. 'I can truly ſay that in the writings of Hume, Mr. Gibbon, Voltaire, Mr. Volney—there is nothing of ſolid argument: all abound in groſs miſtakes and miſrepreſentations,'

Idem, P. 38—'Whereas had he (Mr. Volney) given attention to the hiſtory of the times in which Chriſtianity was promulgated .... he could have no more doubt ... &c. .. it is as much in vain to argue with ſuch a perſon as this, as with a Chineſe or even a Hottentot.'

Idem, P. 119—'Mr. Volney, if we may judge from his numerous quotations of ancient writers in all the learned languages, oriental as well as occidental, muſt be acquainted with all; for he makes no mention of any tranſlation, and yet if we judge from this ſpecimen of his knowledge of them, he cannot have the ſmalleſt tincture of that of the Hebrew, or even of the Greek.'

And, at laſt, after having publiſhed and poſted me in your very title-page, as an *unbeliever* and an infidel; after having pointed me out in your motto as one of thoſe ſuperficial ſpirits who know not how to find out, and are unwilling to encounter, truth; you add, P. 124, immediately after an article in which you ſpeak of me under all theſe denominations—

"The progreſs of infidelity, in the preſent age, is attended with a circumſtance which did not ſo frequently accompany it in any former period, at leaſt, in England; which is, that unbelievers in revelation generally proceed to the diſbelief of the being and the providence of God ſo as to become properly atheiſts." P. 125.

So

So that, according to you, I am a Chineſe, a Hottentot, an unbeliever, an atheiſt, an ignoramus, a man of no ſincerity; whoſe writings are full of nothing but groſs miſtakes and miſrepreſentations.

Now I aſk you, Sir, what has all this to do with the main queſtion? What has my book in common with my perſon? And how can you hold any converſe with a man of ſuch bad connections?*

In the ſecond place, your invitation or, rather, your ſummons to me, to point out to the public the miſtakes which, I THINK, *you have made with reſpect* to *my* opinions, ſuggeſt to me ſeveral obſervations.

1ſt. You ſuppoſe that the public attaches a high importance to your miſtakes and to my opinions: but I cannot act upon a ſuppoſition. Am I not an unbeliever?

2d. You ſay, P. 18, that the public *will expect it from me:* Where are the powers by which you make the public ſpeak and act: Is this alſo a revelation?

3d. You require me to point out your miſtakes. I do not know that I am under any ſuch obligation: I have not reproached you with them: it is not, indeed, very correct to aſcribe to me, by ſelection or indiſcriminately, as you have done, all the opinions ſcattered through my book, ſince, having introduced many different perſons, I was under the neceſſity of making them deliver different ſentiments, according to their different characters. The part which belongs to me is that of a traveller reſting upon the ruins and meditating on the cauſes of the misfortunes of the human race. To be conſiſtent with yourſelf you ought to have aſſigned to me that of the Hottentot or Samoyde ſavage, who argues with the doctors, c. xxiii. and I ſhould have accepted it; you have preferred that of the erudite hiſtorian, c. xxii. Nor do I look upon this as a miſtake; I diſcover, on the contrary, an inſidious

* Theſe queſtions are certainly pointed and appoſite; but, unfortunately, daily experience proves, too ſtrongly, the fatal prevalence of that ſpurious liberality which leads us to adopt practices which we condemn, and to aſſociate with men whom we not only deſpiſe but abhor. *Ed.*

preferred

deſign to engage me in a duel of ſelf-love before the public, wherein you would excite the excluſive intereſt of the ſpectators by ſupporting the cauſe which they approve; while the taſk which you impoſe on me, would only, in the event of ſucceſs, be attended with ſentiments of diſapprobation. Such is your artful purpoſe, that, in attacking me as doubting the exiſtence of Jeſus, you might ſecure to yourſelf, by ſurprize, the favour of every Chriſtian ſect; although your own incredulity in his divine nature is not leſs ſubverſive of Chriſtianity than the profane opinion, which does not find in hiſtory the proof required by the Engliſh law to eſtabliſh a fact: to ſay nothing of the extraordinary kind of pride aſſumed in the ſilent, but palpable, compariſon of yourſelf to Paul and to Chriſt, by likening your labours to theirs as tending to the ſame object, P. X. preface *.

Nevertheleſs, as the firſt impreſſion of an attack always confers an advantage, you have ſome ground for expecting that you may obtain the apoſtolic crown; unfortunately for your purpoſe I entertain no diſpoſition to that of martyrdom: and however glorious to me it might be to fall under the arm of him who has overcome Hume, Gibbon, Voltaire, and even Frederick II. I find myſelf under the neceſſity of declining your theological challenge for a number of ſubſtantial reaſons.

1ſt. Becauſe, to religious quarrels there is no end, ſince the prejudices of infancy and education almoſt unavoidably exclude impartial reaſoning, and, beſides, the vanity of the champions becomes committed, by the very publicity of the conteſt, never to give up a firſt aſſertion, whence reſult a ſpirit of ſectariſm and faction. †

2d. Becauſe

* The *Philoſophiſt* here fights the *philoſopher* with his own weapons, and, in our humble opinion, has an evident advantage over his adverſary. The denial of the Divine nature of the bleſſed founder of our religion is undoubtedly as ſubverſive of pure Chriſtianity as the qualified infidelity acknowledged by Volney; and the pride of the Unitarian muſt be acknowledged to exceed the confidence of the infidel. The combatants, however, are well paired, and there is little ground for triumph or reproach on either ſide. *Ed.*

† There are other vices which ſpring from *vanity* that Volney might have here noticed

2d. Becauſe no one has a right to aſk of me an account of my religious opinions: every inquiſition of this kind is a pretenſion to ſovereignty, a firſt ſtep towards perſecution; and the tolerant ſpirit of this country, which you invoke, has much leſs in view to engage men to ſpeak, than to invite them to be ſilent.

3d. Becauſe ſuppoſing I do hold the opinions you attribute to me, I wiſh not to engage my vanity ſo as never to retract, nor to deprive myſelf of the reſource of a converſion on ſome future day after more ample information.

4th. And becauſe, reverend Sir, if, in the ſupport of your own theſis, you ſhould happen to be diſcomfited before the Chriſtian audience, it would be a dreadful ſcandal; and I will not be a cauſe of ſcandal, even for the ſake of good.

5th. Becauſe in this metaphyſical conteſt our arms are too unequal; you ſpeaking in your mother tongue, which I ſcarcely liſp, might bring forward huge volumes, whilſt I could hardly oppoſe pages; and the public, who would read neither production, might take the weight of books for that of reaſonings.

6th. And becauſe being endowed with the gift of faith, in a pretty ſufficient quantity, you might ſwallow in a quarter of an hour more articles than my logic would digeſt in a week.*

7th. Becauſe again, if you were to oblige me to attend your ſermons, as you have compelled me to read your pamphlet, the congregation would never believe that a man powdered and adorned like any other worldling, could be in the right againſt a man dreſſed out in a large hat, *with ſtrait hair*,† and a mortified countenance, although the goſpel, ſpeaking of the Phariſees of other times, who

noticed;—and, notoriouſly, *infidelity*. Faction and infidelity may, indeed, be conſidered as twin-brothers, having one common parent. Laxity of religious principle will generally be found to accompany looſeneſs of political principle. *Ed.*

* The infidel ſeems here to be alarmed without a cauſe.

† Dr. Prieſtley has diſcarded his wig, ſince he went to America, and wears his own hair.—*Ed.*

were unpowdered, ſays, that when one faſts he muſt anoint his head and waſh his face.*

8th. Becauſe, finally, a diſpute to one having nothing elſe to do, would be a gratification,† while to me, who can employ my time better, it would be an abſolute loſs."

I ſhall not then, reverend Sir, make you my confeſſor in matters of religion, but I will diſcloſe to you my opinion, as a man of letters, on the compoſition of your book. Having, in former days, read many works of theology, I was curious to find out whether by any chemical proceſs you had diſcovered real beings in that world of inviſibles; unfortunately I am obliged to declare to the public, which according to your expreſſion, P. xix, "hopes *to be inſtructed, to be led into truth, and not into error by me,*" that I have not found in your book a ſingle new argument, but the mere repetition of what is told over and over in thouſands of volumes, the whole fruit of which has been to procure for their authors a curſory mention in the dictionary of hereſies. You every where lay down that as proved which remains to be proved; with this peculiarity, that, firing away, as Gibbon ſays, your double battery againſt thoſe who believe too much, and thoſe who believe too little, you hold out your own particular ſenſations as the preciſe criterion of truth; ſo that we muſt be all juſt of your ſize in order to paſs the gate of that new Jeruſalem which you are building. After this, your reputation as a divine might have become problematical with me; but recollecting the principle of the aſſociation of ideas ſo well developed by Locke, whom you hold in eſtimation, and whom, for that reaſon, I am happy to cite to you, although to him I owe that pernicious uſe of my underſtanding which makes me diſbelieve what

* "Moreover when ye faſt, be not as the hypocrites of a ſad countenance; for they diſfigure their faces that they may appear unto men to faſt; but thou when thou faſteſt anoint thine head and waſh thy face."—St. Matt. ch. vi. ver. 16 & 17.

† Volney diſplays a deeper knowledge of his adverſary, than we ſuſpected him of poſſeſſing. That a diſpute is, at all times, a gratification to the reſtleſs ſpirit of the Unitarian philoſopher none who know him will be diſpoſed to deny; he ever has been, is, and ever will be, one of thoſe turbulent beings whoſe favourite amuſement is *to fiſh in troubled water*. *Ed.*

I do

I do not comprehend,*—I perceive why the public having originally attached the idea of talents to the name of Mr. Prieſtley, doctor in chemiſtry, continued by habit to aſſociate it with the name of Mr. Prieſtley, doctor in divinity; which, however, is not the ſame thing; an aſſociation of ideas the more vicious as it is liable to be moved inverſely.† Happily you have yourſelf raiſed a bar of ſeparation between your admirers, by adviſing us in the firſt page of your preface, that your preſent book is eſpecially deſtined for *believers*. To co-operate, however, with you, Sir, in this *judicious* deſign, I muſt obſerve that it is neceſſary to retrench two paſſages, ſeeing they afford the greateſt ſupport to the arguments of *unbelievers*.

* Much perverſion of intellect, we know, had been occaſioned by an haſty and inconſiderate adoption of the crude and indigeſted *political* tenets of Locke whoſe promulgated ſentiments on Civil Government reſulted more from a wiſh to cruſh an adverſary, than from a deſire to eſtabliſh truth; but we were not aware that his religious principles could be ſo open to miſconception, as to be thus publicly urged as the ground of infidelity. We were firſt diſpoſed to think that Mr. Volney had not read Locke's Eſſay on the Human Underſtanding; but admitting him to have read it, it is clear, that he did not underſtand it. In the chapter on the Aſſociation of Ideas, there is nothing which can lead any ſober mind to make human comprehenſion the ſtandard of human belief in ſpiritual affairs. But there is much to ſhew the facility with which human reaſon may, by early impreſſions, by the force of education, by long cuſtom, by a variety of fortuitous circumſtances, in ſhort, be perverted, and rendered wholly inadequate to the purpoſes for which it was deſtined by Providence.

In the chapter "Of Reaſon," Locke expreſsly points out caſes in which reaſon, that infallible ſtandard of infidels, "*fails us*," and among theſe he mentions *infinity*, and the *operation of God*, which are certainly above human comprehenſion, and yet ſubjects of human belief—that is, to minds not infected with the philoſophiſm of infidelity. But this rejection of all that exceeds the comprehenſion of men is, as was before obſerved, founded in *vanity*; it reſults from a miſtaken notion, nurtured by pride, that the human mind is the ſtandard of perfection; and hence, inſtead of ſeeking to acquire improvement by elevating itſelf to a contemplation of the Divine Nature, it arrogantly ſeeks to reduce omnipotence to a level with its own circumſcribed faculties. *Ed.*

† Mr. Blair, doctor of divinity; and Mr. Black, doctor in chemiſtry, met at the coffee-houſe in Edinburgh: a new theological pamphlet written by Dr. Prieſtley was thrown upon the table. "Really," ſaid Doctor Blair, "this man had bettter confine himſelf to chemiſtry, for he is abſolutely ignorant in theology:"—"I beg your pardon," anſwered Doctor Black, "he is in the right, he is a miniſter of the Goſpel, he ought to adhere to his profeſſion, for, in truth, he knows nothing of chemiſtry!"

You ſay, preface, P. XV. "*What is manifeſtly contrary to natural reaſon, cannot be received by it*;"—and P. 62. "With reſpect to intellect, men and brute animals are born in the ſame ſtate, having the ſame external ſenſes, which are the only inlets to all ideas, and conſequently the ſource of all the knowledge and of all the mental habits they ever acquire."

Now if you admit, with Locke, and with us infidels, that every one has the right of rejecting whatever is contrary to his natural reaſon; and that all our ideas and all our knowledge are acquired only by the inlets of our external ſenſes; what becomes of the ſyſtem of revelation* and of that order of things in times paſt, which is ſo contradictory to that of the time preſent? unleſs we conſider it as a dream of the human brain during the ſtate of ſuperſtitious ignorance.—With theſe two ſingle phraſes, I could overturn the whole edifice of your faith. Dread not, however, Sir, in me ſuch overflowing zeal: for the ſame reaſon that I have not the frenzy of martyrdom, I have not that of making proſelytes. It becomes thoſe ardent or, rather, acrimonious tempers, who miſtake the violence of their ſentiments, for the enthuſiaſm of truth; the ambition of noiſe and rumour, for the love of glory; and, for

* Here Mr. Volney openly avows his diſbelief of revealed religion, and urges, in his juſtification, the right aſſerted by Locke of rejecting whatever is contrary to natural reaſon. It is evident that he built this poſition on the following paſſage, in the 18th Chapter of the 4th Book on Human Underſtanding—"*Nothing that is contrary to, and inconſiſtent with, the clear and ſelf-evident dictates of reaſon, has a right to be urged or aſſented to as a matter of faith, wherein reaſon hath nothing to do.*" This, indeed, taken as an abſtract propoſition, is admirably adapted to encourage the growth of infidelity, by ſetting the underſtanding of men above the divine Truths of Revelation, ſome of which moſt certainly ſurpaſs human comprehenſion, and may, for that reaſon, be properly denominated objects of *faith*. But this paſſage is a concluſion from a train of reaſoning which muſt be conſidered in the aggregate; and which, being ſo conſidered, will undoubtedly afford no juſtification to the infidelity of our philoſophiſt, though we are far from thinking it unexceptionable. To enter, however, into a cloſe analyſis of the arguments adduced on the ſubject, would lead us greatly to exceed the limits of a note. It will be ſufficient for our purpoſe, which is to ſhew the invalidity of Volney's inference from Locke's principles, to quote one ſhort paſſage from the latter.—"*Whatſoever is* DIVINE REVELATION *ought to overrule all our opinions, and hath a right to be received with full aſſent.*"—Locke's Works, Vol. I. P. 829. folio edit. *Ed.*

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the love of their neighbour, the deteſtation of his opinions, and the ſecret deſire of dominion.*

As to me who have not received from nature the turbulent qualities of an apoſtle, and never ſuſtained in Europe the character of a diſſenter, I am come to America neither to agitate the conſcience of men, nor to form a ſect, nor to eſtabliſh a colony, † in which, under the pretext of religion, I might erect a little empire to myſelf. I have never been ſeen evangelizing my ideas, either in temples or public meetings. I have never likewiſe practiſed that quackery of beneficence, by which a certain divine, impoſing a tax upon the generoſity of the public, ‡ procures for himſelf the honours of a more numerous audience, and the merit of diſtributing at his pleaſure a bounty which coſts him nothing, and for which he receives grateful thanks dexterouſly ſtolen from the original donors.—Either in the capacity of a ſtranger, or in that of a citizen, a ſincere friend to peace, I carry into ſociety neither the ſpirit of diſſention, nor the deſire of commotion; and becauſe I reſpect in every one what I wiſh him to reſpect in me, the name of liberty is in my mind nothing elſe but the ſynonyma of juſtice; as a man, whether from moderation or indolence, a ſpectator of the world rather than an actor in it, I am every day leſs tempted to take on me the management of the minds or bodies of other men: it is ſufficient for an individual to govern his own paſſions and caprices. If, by one of theſe caprices, I am induced to think it may be uſeful, ſometimes to publiſh my reflections, I do it without obſtinacy or pretenſion to that implicit faith, the ridicule of which you deſire to impart to me, P. 123. My whole book of the Ruins which you treat ſo ungratefully, ſince you *thought it amuſing*, P. 122, evidently bears this character. By means of the contraſted opinions which I have ſcattered through it, it breathes that ſpirit of doubt and uncertainty which appears to

* If Mr. Volney had added *plunder* to the objects of ambition, he would have drawn a tolerably correct picture of his republican countrymen. *Ed.*

† Dr. Prieſtley emigrated to America under the idea of being followed by thoſe of his own ſect, and purchaſed land at Northumberland, in the ſtate of Pennſylvania, in order to reſell it to his fellow-emigrants from Europe, who he expected to ſettle in his neighbourhood. But he was deceived in his expectation.—*Ed.*

‡ Alluding to a charity-ſermon preached by Dr. Prieſtley.—*Ed.*

me

me the beſt ſuited to the weakneſs of the human mind, and the moſt adapted to its improvement, inaſmuch as it always leaves a door open to new truths; while the ſpirit of dogmatiſm and immoveable belief, limiting our progreſs to a firſt received opinion, binds us at hazard, and without reſource, to the yoke of error or falſehood, and occaſions the moſt ſerious miſchiefs to ſociety;* ſince, by combining with the paſſions, it engenders fanaticiſm, which, ſometimes miſled and ſometimes miſleading, though always intolerant and deſpotic, attacks whatever is not of its own nature; drawing upon itſelf perſecution when it is weak, and practiſing perſecution when it is powerful; eſtabliſhing a religion of terror, which annihilates the faculties, and vitiates the conſcience: ſo that, whether under a political or a religious aſpect, the ſpirit of doubt is friendly to all ideas of liberty, truth, or genius, while a ſpirit of confidence is connected with the ideas of tyranny, ſervility, and ignorance. If, as is the fact, our own experience and that of others daily teaches us that what at one time appeared true, afterwards appeared demonſtrably falſe, how can we connect with our judgements that blind and preſumptuous confidence which purſues thoſe of others with ſo much hatred? No doubt it is reaſonable and even honeſt, to act according to our preſent feelings and conviction: but if theſe feelings and their cauſes do vary by the very nature of things, how dare we impoſe upon ourſelves or others an invariable conviction? How, above all, dare we require this conviction in caſes where there is really no ſenſation, as happens in purely ſpeculative queſtions, in which no palpable fact can be preſented?

* Humility is aſſuredly well ſuited to the weakneſs of the human mind; but Mr. Volney ſeems to confound humility with ſcepticiſm which is, moſt commonly, the offspring of arrogance. It is a curious ſpecimen of infidel-logic to infer that a man who adheres to a firſt received opinion muſt, of neceſſity, fall into error or falſehood. It has been the conſtant aim of the modern philoſophers of France to deſtroy all ſettled notions of religion and politics; to unhinge, as it were, the minds of men, and to keep them in a perpetual ſtate of reſtleſſneſs and doubt. By the ſucceſs of their ſchemes, in their own country, they firſt converted a nation of Chriſtians into a nation of ſceptics, and a nation of ſocial beings into a nation of licentious democrats; what has enſued? the ſceptics have become atheiſts; and the democrats political fanatics. "A Spirit of Doubt,"—we make the aſſertion at the riſk of incurring the high diſpleaſure of Mr. Volney—is neither calculated to make men good ſubjects nor good Chriſtians; while "a ſpirit of confidence" in the divine truths of Revelation will at once render them uſeful members of ſociety, and qualify them for a better life. *Ed.*

Therefore

Therefore when opening the book of nature, a more authentic one and more eaſy to be read than leaves of paper blackened over with Greek or Hebrew, when I reflected that the ſlighteſt change in the material world has not been in time paſt, nor is, at preſent, effected by the difference of ſo many religions and ſects which have appeared and ſtill exiſt on the globe, and that the courſe of the ſeaſons, the path of the ſun, the return of rain and drought are the ſame for the inhabitants of each country, whether Chriſtian, Muſulman, Idolators, Catholics, Proteſtants, &c. I am induced to believe that the univerſe is governed by laws of wiſdom and juſtice, very different from thoſe which human ignorance and intolerance would enact. And as, in living with men of very oppoſite religious perſuaſions, I have had occaſion to remark that their manners were, nevertheleſs, very analogous; that is to ſay, among the different Chriſtian ſects, among the Mahometans, and even among thoſe people who were of no ſect—I have found men who practiſe all the virtues public and private, and that too without affectation; while others, who were inceſſantly declaiming of God and religion, abandoned themſelves to every vicious habit, which their belief condemned—I became convinced that Ethics, the doctrine of morality, are the only eſſential, as they are the only demonſtrable, part of religion.—And as, by your own avowal, the only end of religion is to render men better, in order to add to their happineſs, P. 62, I have concluded that there are but two great ſyſtems of religion in the world, that of good ſenſe and beneficence, and that of malice and hypocriſy.*

In cloſing this letter I find myſelf embarraſſed by the nature of the ſentiment which I ought to expreſs towards you; for, in declaring as you have done, P. 123, that you do not care for *the contempt of ſuch men as me*,† (ignorant as you were of my opinion,) you

* This concluſion is truly worthy of an infidel. To *argue* upon ſuch a ſubject, in a country whoſe inhabitants are ſo unenlightened as not to be aſhamed of avowngi themſelves Chriſtians, would be ſuperfluous. We apprehend, however, that Mr. Volney would find ſome difficulty in naming any people whoſe morality was wholly unconnected with religion. *Ed.*

† "And what does it do for me here, except, perhaps, expoſe me to the contempt of *ſuch men* as Mr. Volney, which, however, I feel myſelf *pretty well* able to bear." P. 124.

This language is the more ſurprizing, as Dr. Prieſtley never received any thing from

you tell me plainly that you do not care for their eſteem: I leave, therefore, to your diſcernment and taſte to determine the ſentiment moſt congenial to my ſituation and your deſert.

Philadelphia, Mar. 10, 1797. C. F. VOLNEY.

P. S. I do not accompany this public letter with a private note to Doctor Prieſtley; becauſe communications of that nature carry an appearance of bravado, which, even in exerciſing the right of a neceſſary defence, appear to me incompatible with decency and politeneſs.

from me but civilities. In the year 1791 I ſent him a diſſertation of mine on the chronology of the ancients, in conſequence of ſome charts which he had himſelf publiſhed. His only anſwer was to abuſe me in a pamphlet in the year 1792. After this firſt abuſe, on meeting me here laſt winter, he procured me to be invited to dine with his friend Mr. Ruſſel, at whoſe houſe he lodged; after having ſhown me polite attentions at that dinner, he abuſes me in his new pamphlet. After this ſecond abuſe, he meets me in Spruce-ſtreet, and takes me by the hand as a friend, and ſpeaks of me in a large company under that denomination. *Now I aſk the public what kind of a man is Doctor Prieſtley?*

FINIS.